



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY'S
56th ANNUAL CONVENTION

By Aileen Pierson, Delegate, Golden Gate Audubon Society

First, I want to express my deep appreciation to the Golden Gate Audubon Society for naming me its delegate to the 56th annual convention in New York City. The convention lasted four days, and they were fully and interestingly filled from morning until night. In addition to the serious discussions of our pressing conservation and other problems, we had social get-togethers where there was a chance to meet and talk informally with the officers of the national society and with fellow-Audubonites from all over the country.

As for the meetings, they covered a wide range of subjects and were not limited in scope to the United States. We learned about pesticides in our public waters; about the 14 cranes of Japan, one of which is the Japanese crane that we see in the Japanese prints; about the problem of the albatrosses on Midway Island the research being done there. We saw a film on Nova Scotia; we saw another, taken in Wales, "Seabird Summer," and presented by James Fisher; and we saw the lovely and moving "An Island in Time" about our own Point Reyes Peninsula, presented by Laurel Reynolds who, with Mindy Willis, filmed it. We learned about the flamingos of our western hemisphere; the bald eagle; the grizzly bear; the destruction of our swamps; how each of our two major political parties feels about conservation; and we had an entertaining and educational cruise around Manhattan Island and up the Hudson River. The convention closed with a banquet at the Hotel Roosevelt.

In the face of the encroachment of man on our remaining wilderness, this convention was much concerned about the urgency for conservation action before it is too late. If we are to save our wildlife, we must have: 1) Suitable habitat and we must protect it; 2) good management to keep breeding up and to maintain numbers at a safe margin; 3) an educational program that will get the facts to the general public and stimulate citizen activity.

Here are a few highlights from some of the many sessions at the convention. Dr. John J. Craighead, who, with his brother, is now doing research on population density, breeding behavior, age, etc., of the grizzly bear in Yellowstone, described how they are carrying out their research. In an unusual film we saw, step by step, the capture of the grizzlies; injection of a drug that puts them to sleep; the various tests made (after they were sound asleep, though); and, finally, the marking of the bears. This last is done by pinning brightly colored

plastic ribbons to the ear. Each bear is given a different color combination, and he can afterwards be identified at a great distance. Dr. Craighead said that there are only between 500 and 1000 grizzlies left in the United States, excluding Alaska. There are, of course, none in California, where they were once so numerous that the grizzly bear is our state symbol.

What we know as the wood ibis was called at the convention by its more suitable name, wood stork. Alexander Sprunt IV, who is now head of the research department of the National Audubon Society, told us what has happened to this great bird. About 30 years ago there were more than 100,000 wood storks in the United States. By 1957 their numbers had shrunk to 8000 as a result of lumbering in the cypress swamps, which ruined their nesting sites; drainage of the Everglades, where the storks found their food; and droughts, which, with the drainage, were disastrous to the birds. The picture is now somewhat brighter. Because of a series of wet years since 1957, the wood stork population had doubled by last year to 8000 breeding pairs, and they raised about 23,000 young.

It is believed that the bald eagle may be in danger. As he is our national symbol, it would indeed be a sad day if he should be exterminated in the United States as has our own state symbol, the grizzly bear, in California. During the convention, President Carl W. Buchheister announced that the National Audubon Society will undertake an inventory of the bald eagle in North America. It will be the first continent-wide survey of a bird. The inventory will be followed by biological research into the life of the bald eagle. Incidentally, during the discussion at the convention, someone from the floor suggested including the golden eagle in the survey. This would have particular significance for us here in the west, where we still rather often see this magnificent bird on our local field trips.

Another topic that received serious consideration was the dangerous effects on wildlife, soil organisms, domestic animals, and possibly man himself, of the highly toxic chemicals that are used as sprays. Some of them, moreover, do not even disintegrate in the soil, but are cumulative, which makes them even more dangerous. In addition, the run-off of these pesticides into public waters is something that needs action on a federal, rather than a state, level, as rivers do not stop at the state line. This matter of pesticides in the public waters is of concern to other countries as well. According to a recent article in "Outdoor California," the publication of the Department of Fish and Game: "Even the Russians are. . . becoming alarmed. . . and are calling for drastic action. . . and for long-term planning to embrace all branches of industry and public health organizations."

Another rather frightening meeting at the convention covered the race for the wetlands, which conservationists seem to be losing. Already about 70% of our wetlands have been eliminated. We urgently need at least 7 million publicly owned acres of wetland habitat for wildlife. During the 1950's we acquired about 254,000 acres. If we continue at this rate, it is going to take 144 years to reach our goal. Also, the longer we wait the more the land will cost us. While we were acquiring that 254,000 acres, incidentally, 17,000,000 acres were drained under the sponsorship of the Department of Agriculture alone.

To conclude this summary of some convention highlights, I have listed a few suggestions to local societies that came out during the various meetings.

1. We need to step up our educational work, concentrating especially on the schools, enlisting the interest and cooperation of teachers and of the P. T. A. s.

2. Individual Audubon members should be more active in writing their legislators, both national and state. Legislators respond to the wishes of their constituents.

3. Members should attend conservation hearings and meetings and make their views known.

4. There was some feeling expressed that the local societies tend to over-emphasize bird identification. It was suggested that field trips also be taken for tree identification, flowers, life in tidepools, geology, etc.

5. Before the hunting season begins, local societies might give a free course in duck identification to sportsmen. Where this has been tried it has met with enthusiasm, improved public relations, and created more widespread interest in Audubon work.

NOVEMBER TRIP TO CONN LAKE

We had field trips to Conn Lake on Saturday and Sunday, November 26 and 27. Probably because that weekend came on the heels of a bad storm and the weather was still threatening, the turnout was poor, particularly on Saturday when only 4 people showed up. The next day was somewhat better, with an attendance of 12.

Sunday was clear and cool and calm. But Saturday was a magic day. It was one of the most photogenic we've ever had for a field trip--but, unfortunately, none of us had a camera. There was sunshine and there were great dark clouds, and everything was incredibly sharp in color. It rained only once, when we were at the north side of the lake. Then, we walked along right in the middle of a rainbow, with darkness both in front of us and in back. There we were in all that radiance, feeling for a moment that we were enchanted. We had barely recovered from that experience when we looked up at the whirl of wings. About 100 Wood Ducks flew right over our heads. They landed in the little bay where we usually see them, and because there were only 4 of us we could get close enough to see them clearly.

On both Saturday and Sunday we had especially good views of an Arctic Loon that was near the dam. He was almost in breeding plumage, but the throat was mostly white. The straight bill, gray top of the head, and the striking white markings on the back were quite evident. On both days, too, we had Red Phalarope, at least a dozen on Saturday and one on Sunday. On Sunday we had one yellowlegs that gave us some trouble. Our first impression was that it was a Lesser, as it did not have a heavy enough bill for a Greater. The call it gave repeatedly was neither a one- two- or three-syllabled note, but a whole series. Finally it and a Killdeer posed close together, and we then saw that it was considerably larger than the Killdeer. The bill seemed to have a slight upward curve. So, after much debate, we concluded that the bird was probably a small Greater Yellowlegs, rather than a large Lesser Yellowlegs. (Peterson's Texas guide gives the number of inches as 13-15 and 9-1/2 - 11, respectively, with the Killdeer as 9-11.) We saw 3 Common Snipe at the same place. On Saturday we saw no snipe, but we did see a Lesser Yellowlegs at the north end of the lake. No doubt about that one.

A combined total of 75 birds were seen on the two trips: Arctic Loon; Eared, Western, and Pied-billed Grebe; Double-crested Cormorant; Great Blue Heron; Whistling Swan (1); Canada Goose; Mallard; Gadwall; Green-winged Teal; Shoveler; Wood and Ring-necked Duck; Canvasback; Lesser Scaup; Common Goldeneye; Bufflehead; Ruddy Duck; Turkey Vulture; Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, and Sparrow Hawk;

California Quail; Ring-necked Pheasant; American Coot; Killdeer; Common Snipe (3); Willet; Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs; Least Sandpiper; Red Phalarope; California and Ring-billed Gull; Band-tailed Pigeon; Belted Kingfisher; Redshafted Flicker; Acorn, Lewis', Hairy, and Nuttall's Woodpecker; Black and Say's Phoebe; Steller's and Scrub Jay; Common Crow; Plain Titmouse; Common Bushtit; White-breasted Nuthatch; Wrentit; Robin; Varied and Hermit Thrush; Western Bluebird; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Water Pipit; Cedar Waxwing; Loggerhead Shrike; Hutton's Vireo; Audubon's Warbler; Western Meadowlark; Brewer's Blackbird; House Finch; Pine Siskin; American and Lesser Goldfinch; Rufous-sided and Brown Towhee; Savannah and Lark Sparrow; Oregon Junco; White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and Song Sparrow.

HAROLD G. PETERSON, Leader, Saturday

AILEEN PIERSON, Historian, Saturday

A. LAURENCE CURL, Leader and Historian, Sunday

NOVEMBER TRIP TO ORINDA

Less than a baker's dozen made up a group that birded the Orinda area on Sunday, November 13. However, 65 species were listed by noon, when we lunched at San Pablo Dam with 4 scopes working. After much searching, we brought Wood Duck and Spotted Sandpiper into focus. Scopes are a must on San Pablo Dam now that the road has been moved back several hundred yards from the lake proper.

Of special interest, 10 Hooded Merganser stayed on Lake Cascade until after 9:00 a.m. Usually they move out by 7:30 a.m. Firsts for the Cascade area were Red Phalarope and Say's Phoebe.

Lower Bear Creek is denuded, because the Briones Valley Cam is being constructed at the mouth of the creek. Upper Bear Creek and Briones Valley are still worth-while birding areas and eventually much of this will be made into a county park.

We saw the following 65 species on the trip: Great Blue Heron; Canada Goose; Mallard; Gadwall; Pintail; Shoveler; Wood Duck; Hooded Merganser; Cooper's, Red-tailed, and Sparrow Hawk; California Quail; American Coot; Killdeer; Spotted Sandpiper; Red Phalarope; Glaucous-winged, Herring, California, and Ring-billed Gull; Mourning Dove; Great Horned Owl; Anna's Hummingbird; Belted Kingfisher; Red-shafted Flicker; Acorn Woodpecker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy and Nuttall's Woodpecker; Black and Say's Phoebe; Steller's and Scrub Jay; Chestnut-backed Chickadee; Plain Titmouse; Common Bushtit; White-breasted Nuthatch; Wrentit; Bewick's Wren; Mockingbird; Robin; Varied and Hermit Thrush; Western Bluebird; Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Cedar Waxwing; Loggerhead Shrike; Hutton's Vireo; Audubon's Warbler; House Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Redwinged and Brewer's Blackbird; Purple and House Finch; American and Lesser Goldfinch; Rufous-sided and Brown Towhee; Oregon Junco; White-crowned, Golden-crowned, Fox, and Song Sparrow.

PETER A. VEITCH, Leader and Historian

NOVEMBER TRIP TO SACRAMENTO VALLEY REFUGES

On November 5 and 6 some 35 members and guests of the Golden Gate and Mt. Diablo Audubon Societies visited the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge, south of Willows, and, after staying overnight in the vicinity of Gridley, toured the Gray Lodge State Game Refuge near that town. On Saturday night most of us had dinner together at the Country Kitchen just south of Gridley.

The weather was threatening all day Saturday, but no rain fell until we were leaving the Sacramento Refuge. It rained intermittently during the night but was fair Sunday, with cloud formations that made a beautiful backdrop for the flocks of geese, cranes, ducks, etc.

At the Sacramento Refuge Mr. O'Neil, the refuge manager, showed colored slides of some of the crops grown on the refuge as winter food for the waterfowl to prevent depredation of nearby farmlands. He also had slides of the birds themselves. After this orientation, Mr. O'Neil guided us around the southern half of the refuge where we saw Whistling Swans and White Pelicans. In addition to these, some of our more noteworthy observations included Ross Geese, Sandhill Cranes, Golden Eagle, Short-eared Owl, White-tailed Kite, and Ferruginous Hawk. The latter two species were found between Meridian and Arbuckle, as most of us took the slow but interesting route home which skirts the western side of the Sutter Buttes. In this butte-sink area we watched several thousand Cackling Geese land in a field; and in the same area a loose flock of Turkey Vultures, numbering close to 100 birds, was circling.

The following 89 species were observed: Western and Pied-billed Grebe; Double-crested Cormorant; Great Blue Heron; Common and Snowy Egret; Black-crowned Night Heron; American Bittern; Whistling Swan; Canada, White-fronted, Snow, and Ross Goose; Mallard; Gadwall; Pintail; Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal; American Widgeon; Shoveler; Wood Duck; Canvasback; Bufflehead; Ruddy Duck; Turkey Vulture; White-tailed Kite; Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, Rough-legged, and Ferruginous Hawk; Golden Eagle; Marsh and Sparrow Hawk; California Quail; Ring-necked Pheasant; Sandhill Crane; Sora Rail; Common Gallinule; American Coot; Killdeer; Common Snipe; Curlew; Greater Yellowlegs; Least Sandpiper; Dunlin; Long-billed Dowitcher; American Avocet; Ring-billed Gull; Mourning Dove; Great Horned and Short-eared Owl; Red-shafted Flicker; Acorn, Lewis and Nuttall Woodpecker; Black and Say Phoebe; Horned Lark; Tree Swallow; Scrub Jay; Yellow-billed Magpie; Common Crow; Plain Titmouse; White-breasted Nuthatch; Brown Creeper; Long-billed Marsh Wren; Mockingbird; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Water Pipit; Cedar Waxwing; Loggerhead Shrike; Starling; Audubon Warbler; House Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Yellow-headed, Redwinged, and Brewer's Blackbird; House Finch; American and Lesser Goldfinch; Savannah and Lark Sparrow; Oregon Junco; Chipping, White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and Song Sparrow.

HARRY C. ADAMSON, Leader and Historian

THE CONSERVATION FRONT: C.C.C. CONFERENCE

Two days at the 20th Annual Conference of the California Conservation Council, which met at the hospitable Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History November 17 through 19, briefed and "rekindled" your Conservation Chairman on vital issues facing our state. Presentations by top-ranking planners and conservationists also left us again with some forebodings: an expected state population of 42 million by 1980--with 15 million of this in our Bay Region! And they will need not only jobs, food, water and all public utilities and services, but also recreation and open space! All agriculture and horticulture will probably be pushed out into the Interior Valley--though here, too, farm lands are menaced by commerce and urban sprawl.

What solutions are offered? Careful classification of land uses; control of the present suicidal usurpation of prime farm land by sub-divisions and other developments; new sources of water; more

legislation for "greenbelting" and scenic easements. Expanding budgets for our National and State Parks--with emphasis on seashore acquisition--more forest camps and reservoir site recreation facilities--and a faster rate of land acquisition for municipal and regional park districts--these measures will help to meet the pyramiding demands we shall face.

Ethel Richardson of our Conservation Committee also attended and remained for the third day of the Conference, when many stimulating discussions and demonstrations were offered by educators--from elementary to college level. Bill Goodall brought up some fascinating new portable display panels just designed by the South California Audubon Center staff. The Museum juniors, local Campfire Girls and Girl Scouts furnished many courtesies, while the Boy Scouts and Cubs staged a county-wide cleanup of parks and beaches in our honor.

A hearing by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors on the matter of future use or disposition of the former Arroyo del Valle Sanitarium properties skirting the Livermore Valley, held at the Courthouse on December 6, was well attended and revealed a strong preponderance of opinion in favor of preserving this beautiful site for park and recreation use. The Livermore Park and Recreation District is now maintaining part of the acreage as public park. The projected South Bay Aqueduct will skirt the property and a large reservoir will be built nearby. Private sanitarium, medical plan groups, organizations for retarded children--and recently the State Board of Education--have made overtures toward this choice site, but we believe its highest, best use would be for public park, recreation, and youth-group camp.

PAUL F. COVEL, Conservation Chairman

MEETING JANUARY, 1961

The 514th regular meeting of the Golden Gate Audubon Society will be held on January 12, 1961, 7:30 p.m. at the Rotary Natural Science Center on Lake Merritt, in Oakland, near the duck feeding station.

Our speaker will be Mr. Paul F. Covell, a Director and a former President of the Society and a long-time contributor in many ways to the Audubon cause. His talk is entitled "A Bird's Eye View of Europe"; and he will illustrate it with slides. Mr. Covell was in Europe this past summer, so we look forward to a very interesting meeting, to which you are invited to bring friends.

A no-host dinner preceding the meeting will be held at Conover's Restaurant, Perkins and Grand Avenue, just one block from the Science Center. Six o'clock. Everyone welcome!

MRS. CECIL EARLE, Program Chairman

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following members to the Golden Gate Audubon Society: from Berkeley, Miss Thelma Carder; Mrs. Wilson Myers, Mr. Chauncey R. Hare and Mrs. and Mr. Henry Stauffer; from El Cerrito, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Cassell; from Oakland, Mr. Ted Carr and Mr. Harold G. Sharp; from San Francisco, Mrs. Hilda M. Duckett and Mr. and Mrs. David Karasick; and from Walnut Creek, Mr. John Irving. AGNES OCZKEWECZ, Membership Chairman

THE ALASKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY, organized less than a year ago, has already published four issues of its News Bulletin. Under the editorship of Virginia Wood, of the team "Ginny and Woody," directors of Camp Denali, this promises to be a vigorous organ inspired by an earnest group of conservationists.

FIELD TRIPS FOR JANUARY

Sunday, January 15, to Tomales Bay and Dillon's Beach. This trip has been planned to study the east side of Tomales Bay. The wintering species are probably all in so large groups of water and shore birds should be seen. Harlequin Duck, Red-necked Grebe, Black Brant and Bald Eagle have been seen in this area. Meet at the hotel in Point Reyes at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch, binoculars, telescope and interested friends. Leader, Harold G. Peterson, LO 8-7534.

Tuesday, January 17, Golden Gate Park. This trip will start at 9:30 a.m. from the Aquarium in Golden Gate Park which can be reached by taking the the No. 10 Municipal bus. Such interesting species as Varied and Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned, Myrtle, Audubon and Townsend Warbler may be seen. Some winter visiting Allen Hummingbirds have been reported. Anna Hummingbird nests might be seen, as they start nesting activities as early as December. The last time the society scheduled a January trip in the park was in 1952. This particular area has not been covered before at this time of the year so it should prove to be very interesting.

There has been a demand for field trips during week days. A schedule of such trips has been arranged so as to permit participation by those who wish to use public transportation. Co-leaders, Miss Florence Plymell, PROspect 6-1208 and Mrs. Hubert Fry, SEabright 1-2874.

Saturday, January 21, Lake Merritt and Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland. This lake is a good place to observe many species of water birds at close range. Some unusual birds may also be seen in the pens and on display in the dome. A visit to the Rotary Natural Science Center is interesting and educational. This nationally known wildlife refuge is becoming more important to this community every year. Many groups use its facilities to learn more about nature and wildlife. Meet at the Rotary Natural Science Center in Lakeside Park near the feeding area at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch, warm clothing, binoculars, telescopes and interested friends. Leader, Paul Covell, KE 6-4120.

Those wishing to go to Joaquin Miller Park and the Robin Roost meet again at the Rotary Science Center at 1:00 p.m. From there travel will be by auto to the above area. This is the place mentioned by Howard L. Cogswell in connection with the Robin banding program. If the weather permits and the Robins cooperate a demonstration of bird banding will be given by members of W. B. B. A. at this point.

HAROLD G. PETERSON, Field Trips Chairman

CONFERENCE ON PROSPECTS OF BAY AREA REGIONAL PARKS

Prospects for the development of a system of regional parks and greenbelts in the San Francisco Bay Area will be discussed at a one-day conference January 27 in San Francisco.

Titled "Matching Resources and Needs for Open Space in the San Francisco Bay Area," the conference will meet at the University of California Extension Center under the auspices of U. C. Extension, the Bureau of Public Administration, and the Department of City and Regional Planning in cooperation with the Citizens for Regional Recreation and Parks in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Further information and application for enrollment may be obtained from the Department of Conferences, University Extension, University of California, Berkeley 4, California.

RESERVATIONS are coming rapidly for the Asilomar convention, MARCH 25 - 28, 1961. If you haven't sent yours, don't delay. This promises to be another record event, from viewpoint of speakers, program, and attendance.

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